

# Report to New York City Veterans from Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney

NOVEMBER 2003

Dear Veteran,

Throughout history, America's military men and women have traveled the world to fight for freedom. Veterans' issues have long been a top priority for me—as the wife of a former Navy Lieutenant J.G., daughter of a member of the Air Force, and sister of a member of the 173rd Airborne Brigade in Vietnam.

Many have been outraged by recent developments in veterans policy, which seem like desperate, ham-handed budget-cutting brought on by irresponsible tax cuts. The budget proposed by the administration sought to limit access to veteran's health care by increasing prescription drug copayments and enrollment fees—which, by the Administration's own estimate, would reduce enrollment by 1.3 million.

And now, the Veterans Administration is seriously considering the move of all inpatient care from the Manhattan VA Hospital facility to the Brooklyn VA hospital (located in Bay Ridge, two miles from the nearest subway stop) and moving outpatient care to other, unnamed locations in or around Manhattan. At a time when thousands of veterans are waiting months just for an appointment at VA facilities, slashing services is just plain crazy.

If you haven't been there, let me tell you this vital facility has been designated a center of excellence in cardiac surgery, neurosurgery, cardiac-vascular surgery, comprehensive rehabilitation services, HIV/AIDS care and dialysis. This high-quality care is largely attributable to its close connections with the other great hospitals nearby in Manhattan.

I'm working to fight the VA proposal. I've gathered the support of 40 New York elected officials in opposition—joining together to ask the VA to reconsider. I've also testified against the plan before the City Council and the CARES Commission, a group appointed by the VA to evaluate the merits of their proposal. I'll keep up the fight, doing everything possible to protect the Manhattan Veterans Hospital.

In an effort to fight the Administration's cuts in benefits, in June I co-sponsored H.R. 2569, **The Salute to Veterans and the Armed Forces Act of 2003**, which makes veterans' health care more affordable and accessible and expands educational opportunities for reservists. The package also requires full retirement benefits to disabled veterans and establishes standards to speed up the adjudication of disability claims.

As the Congressional session progresses, I'll continue to fight to ensure that veterans receive appropriate health care, housing, education, and training—and keep you appraised of my progress. The men and women who risked their lives for our country deserve the best our nation can offer.

Sincerely,

Carolyn B. Maloney

## Fighting to Save the Manhattan VA Hospital



Rep. Maloney speaks out for fair health benefits for veterans, with Lt. Col. Bernard Ray and Pat Toro Jr., President of the Vietnam Veterans of America, Queens Chapter #32.

### Here's how to contact me:

#### Manhattan:

1651 Third Avenue  
Suite 311  
New York, NY 10128  
212/860-0606

#### Queens:

28-11 Astoria Blvd.  
Astoria, NY 11102  
718/932-1804

#### Washington, D.C. :

2331 Rayburn HOB  
Wash., D.C. 20515  
202/225-7944

#### Web page:

[www.house.gov/  
maloney](http://www.house.gov/maloney)

P.S. As your representative in Congress, it's important to me to ensure that federal agencies are appropriately responsive to your needs. If you've applied for a benefit and believe your application is not being processed properly, or if you are having any other problems with a federal agency, my staff may be able to help.

Please don't hesitate to call or write me or my staff to ask for assistance. If you'd like to visit with a staff member, it's always best to call first for an appointment. Please call my Manhattan or Queens offices listed at left.

And, as always, I want to hear any suggestions and recommendations you may have regarding legislation. Many of my best initiatives originate with ideas brought to me by constituents!

## Legislative Report

It's time to expand benefits for the nation's veterans. That's why I support H.R. 303, **The Retired Pay Restoration Act of 2003**, which would permit retired members of the armed forces with service-connected disabilities to be paid both mil-

itary retired pay and veterans' disability compensation. Current law requires retirees to pay for their service-connected disability benefits through deductions from their military retirement benefits. As of Sept. 26, 2003, the discharge petition to bring this bill before the House of Representatives for a vote had 203 signatures. The petition needs 218 to be considered.

I supported several bills which passed the House this summer. H.R. 1460, the **Veterans Entrepreneurship and Benefits Improvement Act of 2003**, expands veterans self-employment and small business educational opportunities, authorizes a new federal procurement program for service-disabled veteran small business owners, extends the VA's specially adapted housing grant, reinstates the VA vendee loan program, and authorizes accrued benefits claims beyond the current two-year limitation.

H.R. 2357, the **Veterans Health Care Improvement Act of 2003**, which also passed, provides for hospital and nursing home care and medical services to certain WWII veterans of the Philippines Commonwealth Army and former Philippines "New Scout" veterans who now reside in the U.S., and allows the Secretary of VA to appoint chiropractors to the Veterans Health Administration.

Also passed was H.R. 2170, **The Veterans' Memorials Protection Act of 2003**, which I cosponsored, which prohibits the willful desecration of a monument on public property that commemorates the service of any person in the armed forces. The legislation was incorporated into S. 330, a bill to protect and recognize veterans' memorials, and became law in May.

Other measures still await passage. I've cosponsored H.R. 2318, **The Assured Funding for Veterans Health Care Act of 2003**, which would create a guaranteed funding stream for veterans' health care, and improve funding for special VA treatment programs such as post-traumatic stress disorder, the blind, spinal cord injuries, psychosocial rehabilitation and long-term care. Thousands of young men and women in uniform are putting their lives on hold and on the line by serving our country. When they return home, they ought to find VA hospitals accessible, without being unfairly termed "high income" (even if they are earning as little as \$25,000 a year!).

Also under consideration is H.R. 1442, **The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Visitor Center Act**, which I have cosponsored, authorizing the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund to design and construct a visitor center at the site of the beautiful Maya Lin-designed Memorial. If you've been to the Memorial—and I recommend it—you know that it draws large numbers of visitors at all hours. A visitors' center could greatly enhance the experience.

If you'd like to learn more about these bills, or any other legislation, please visit the legislation database at <http://thomas.loc.gov/>

## VA loans for co-ops

A home is a home—whether it's an apartment, townhouse, mobile home, or co-op. Yet under current law, veterans can buy a house, townhouse, condominium, or mobile home, but not residential co-operative units with their VA loans. With the bipartisan support of Rep. Jack Quinn (R-*Buffalo*), I reintroduced H.R. 1935, the **Veterans Housing Fairness Act of 2003**, which will give veterans the freedom to choose where they live by allowing veterans to use their VA loans to purchase co-ops.

In some areas of New York co-operative housing comprises as much as 30% of all residential-owned property. I believe it's unfair to New Yorkers who served and are eligible for VA loans to be denied the option of buying a co-op with VA assistance..

## Veterans can record their part of history

The Veterans History Project collects and preserves audio and video recordings from U.S. veterans. The Project, which was signed into law on October 27, 2000, is overseen by The American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. There are 19 million veterans living in the country, many in New York, and each has a story to tell about the service and sacrifice which changed not only their lives, but also this nation.

I encourage you to take part in the Veterans History Project. To find out how, contact the Library of Congress at (202) 707-4916 or visit the VHP website at [www.loc.gov/vets](http://www.loc.gov/vets).

## Veterans funeral honors

Military funeral honors are the final demonstration of a nation's gratitude to those who have defended our country. If requested by an eligible veterans family, an honor guard detail will be provided and will perform a ceremony

that includes the folding and presenting of the American flag to the next of kin and the playing of "Taps." Families of eligible veterans request honors through their funeral director, who then contacts the appropriate Service. For more information, visit the Military Funeral Honors website at [www.militaryfuneralhonors.osd.mil](http://www.militaryfuneralhonors.osd.mil).

## Useful Phone Numbers

NYS Div. of Veterans Affairs <i>toll-free</i>	888.VETS.NYS
NY VA Regional Office <i>toll-free</i>	800.827.1000
NYC Veterans Medical Center	212.686.7500
Arlington National Cemetery	703.695.3250
Headstones and Markers <i>toll-free</i>	800.697.6947
Gulf War Help line <i>toll-free</i>	800.749.8387
CHAMPVA <i>toll-free</i>	800.733.8387
VA Insurance Center <i>toll-free</i>	800.669.8477
Health Benefits <i>toll-free</i>	877.222.8387
Education Benefits <i>toll-free</i>	888.442.4551
Mammography Hotline <i>toll-free</i>	888.492.7844